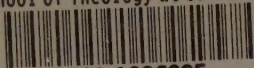


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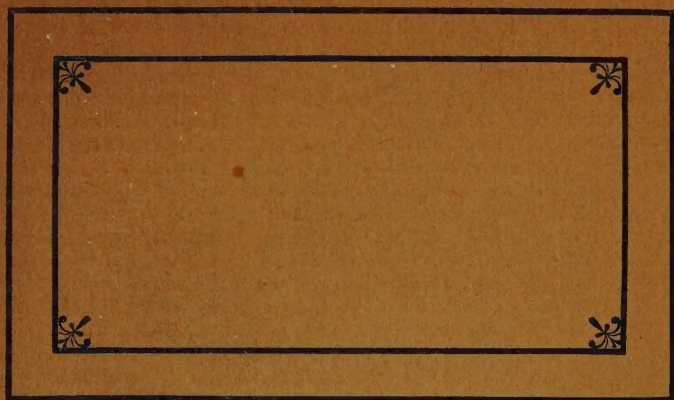
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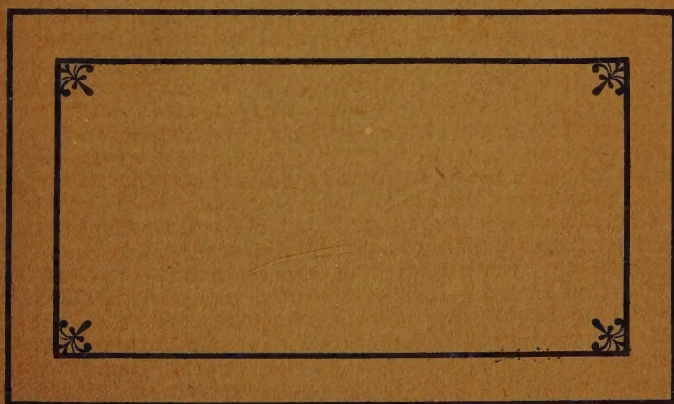
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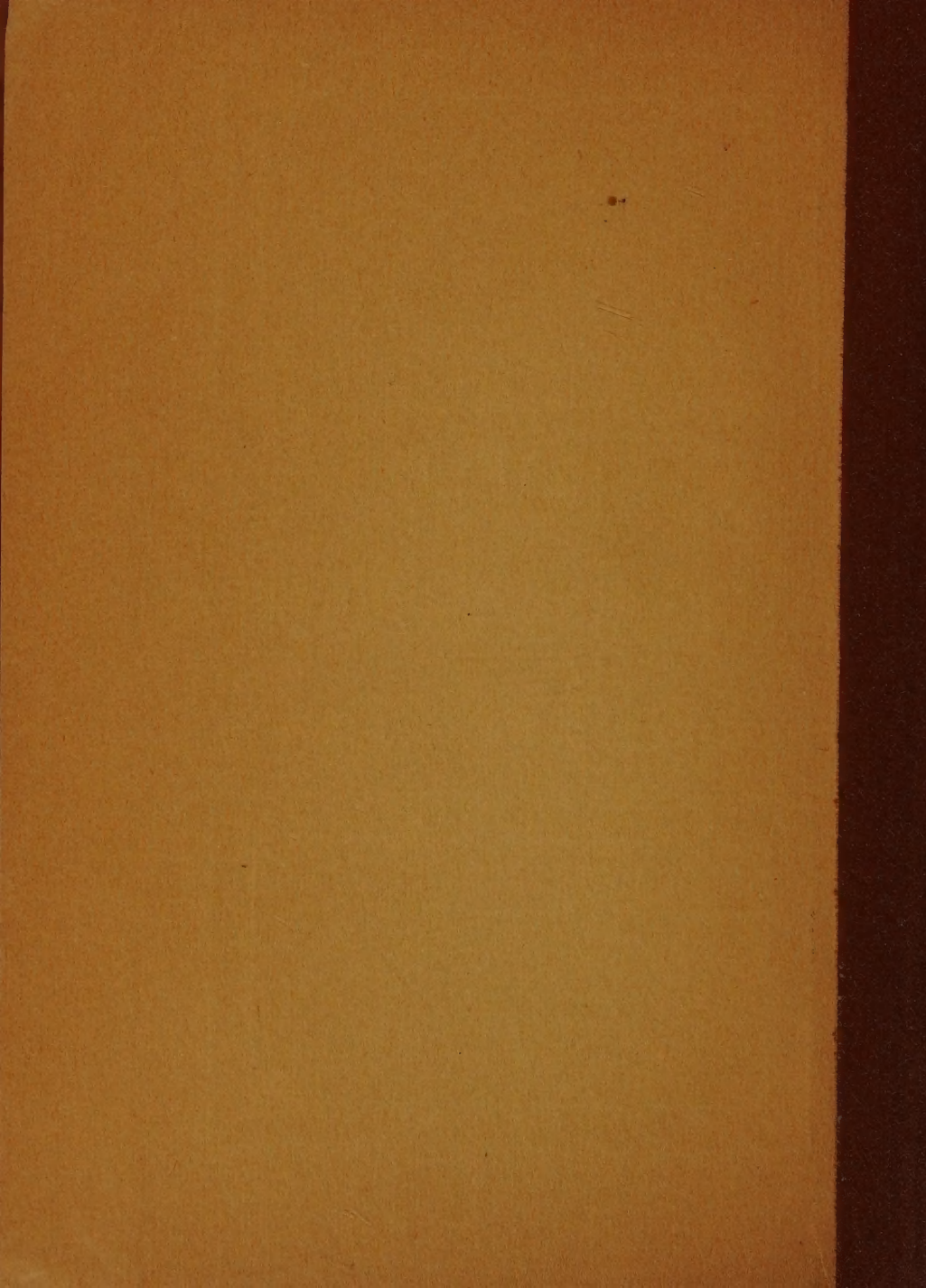
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MIRACLES
IN
NATURE AND REVELATION

By W. D. WILSON, D.D.





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MIRACLES
IN
NATURE AND IN REVELATION

AND ESPECIALLY THE GREAT MIRACLE OF

Our Lord's Resurrection from the Dead

BY

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MIRACLES.

§ 1. *Their Nature and Importance.*

The scepticism of our age is chiefly concerned with the subject of miracles. Some there are who merely doubt whether any have ever been performed, or whether at least, we have any sufficient evidence of their occurrence. Others there are who go so far as to deny, on what they claim to be philosophical grounds, that miracles, or any interruption of the ordinary course and phenomena of Nature, are possible.

The question naturally occurs, why should any one doubt or deny the reality of miracles? To this question the first answer is, and it is a perfectly reasonable one, that at all events they are unusual, that there have been but few and it is much safer on purely scientific and common-sense grounds, to doubt and distrust all narratives that claim to describe or assert the reality of their occurrence.

We live in the midst of events and phenomena that make up what we call "the order and course of nature." These events and phenomena are supposed to be guided by laws which are uniform and inexorable, so that with the concurrence of the same causes and antecedents, the same event will invariably follow; and that no event can occur without them. Hence, anything that is alleged

to have occurred that is not in accordance with these laws, is to be regarded as either something in the course of nature which has not yet been explained or accounted for, or as a mistake or a fraud, and as in no wise implying or proving a Divine Interposition.

But any religion that is a Religion at all and not a mere Philosophy, or an imposture, must rest on and be attested by miracles ; for, unless the man that teaches it "do such works as no man can do unless God be with him," we have no means of distinguishing the truths given by Revelation, from the discoveries of science, the dreams of the poet, the delusions of the enthusiast, or the impostures of priest-craft.

In fact, Revelation itself is something out of the natural order of things, supernatural—a miracle. We possess faculties by the proper use of which we perceive at once the objects around us, their obvious properties and relations. By insight, and the various forms of observation, induction and reasoning, we make progress in our discoveries of the facts and laws of nature, until, in this nineteenth century, there are men who declare that the truths we can thus discover constitute all that can properly be called knowledge ; and all that is or can be of any value to mankind.

Nevertheless, any religion that has power to elevate man and lead him to a higher life, must contain, and be based upon, truths which he has not yet discovered for himself ; and to be complete and final, it must make statements of truths which are alike beyond discovery and beyond comprehension, and for that reason beyond proof and demonstration by any process known or possible to man's natural faculties.

If, therefore, there are any truths that are above comprehension, and if, in the time past, there have been communicated to man, for his guidance in religion and morals, any truths that he has not thus attained by the process of discovery, it must have been by revelation, and revelation, in this sense, was a miracle.

Take for an example, the Mosaic account of Creation. Where did he get it? It surely is not only not in accord with, but it is, in most important respects, directly contrary to, the cosmogonies that were in existence in the other nations of the world at that time. It is true that the author does not state the facts in terms of modern science;—there were no such terms in existence for him to use at that time. But he stated the facts in terms that neither affirm or imply anything that is at all contradictory of these truths and facts.

All the other old systems represent their gods as having been produced by the earth, the material heavens, or the sea. No one of them represents God as over, and the creator of, all other things. And in many of the details which they expressly assert, they are totally irreconcilable with what we know to be facts.

So, too, the two religions, if we will call them two rather than one,—the Jewish and the Christian,—are the only religions that the world has ever seen, that have exerted an elevating influence upon the people that have received them.

Notwithstanding the fact that in both cases—the Jewish and the Christian—the people degenerated from their first standard, introducing errors, superstitions and degrading practices, the great truths of the system remained, could be appealed to and received as a means

of rousing the people, inaugurating a reformation and leading onward and upwards to better results. The prophets of the Old Dispensation and the Reformers in the New, show this to be the case and have demonstrated its irresistible power.

These facts are obvious to every student of history. Among the Jews, notwithstanding lapses into idolatry, and the corruptions of manners and morals that always ensued, their prophets were able, by pointing to the Divine Judgments, to effect a return of a few, at least, of the people, and thus, at the introduction of the New Dispensation, its Founder found a people among whom the tendency to idolatry and polytheism were entirely exterminated and many of the worst and most beastly vices that prevailed everywhere among the heathen, had ceased to be practiced so long that among the Jews of our Lord's time they had not even a name.

So with Christianity. It directs the thoughts and aspirations of man's heart upward. And notwithstanding the ignorance, superstitions and errors of the middle ages, it was the one means of bringing the people who had embraced it, through that age of darkness and barbarism to the science and civilization of this age. It was an influence and power that no ignorance, superstition, or degradation of the people could bring down to their level or deprive of its power for good—its power to reform and elevate the people who had accepted it.

Now, in all these respects the Jewish and Christian religions are in contrast with all the other systems that have ever or anywhere gained the attention of followers and prevailed in the world. They were of human

origin and succumbed to the degenerating influences of fallen humanity.

But with these two exceptions, if we are to regard them as two rather than one, I know of no religion, among the heathen nations, that did not itself degenerate with the people, and of itself exert a degenerating, rather than an elevating, influence on the masses of the people. When Christ came there was no nation except the Jews where human sacrifices were not only lawful, but occasionally offered ; none where parents were not allowed to put their own children to death, if they did not feel able or care to have the trouble or expense of raising them ; no one in which the marriage relation, of one man and one wife for life, was either required by law or enforced by public sentiment. Female virtue was neither expected, respected, nor protected, especially in the lower class of people.

And both of these religions were attested by Miracles. Does this fact, or does it not, prove the reality of miracles since the creation of man and attest their importance? Have there been any miracles—any Divine interpositions in the order and course of natural events?

But it has been said that miracles are no proofs of doctrine—no proofs that what a man that works them says, is true. And in a sense this is true. It is true that miracles are no proofs of the doctrines that are taught, in the way that facts of nature are proof of the laws of nature : just as the *words* of a man are not always proof or manifestations of what he really thinks. But they are proofs and manifestations of what he wants and intends to have us believe; and in so far as he has authority over us or to give us directions, his words re-

lieve us of responsibility and throw the responsibility of what we do upon him.

A modern sceptic, one of the leaders of the so-called agnostics, has said that "whatever may have been the origin and source of what we call the 'Law of Moses,' written in the Pentateuch, there is no system of civil law, either ancient or modern, that provides so effectually for the good morals and the natural rights of all men, as does that same so-called Mosaic Law." Was it of Moses, or was it of God? And even if it was taught by Moses, as confessedly it was, who taught it to Moses? Was it not given by the inspiration of God?

If, then, God works a miracle, or enables any man to do "such miracles as no man can do except God be with him," we may not fully comprehend what he teaches, or see all the reasons for the commands he gives us; but we may be sure that God speaks by him and that whatever he teaches, if we accept it in the best interpretation and construction we can put upon it, we are believing what God would have us to believe and are doing what He would have us to do.

The proof of any event may be referred to three heads: (1)—An adequate cause, (2)—Competent testimony, and (3) Legitimate consequences.

It is not always the case, however; that we can have these three, or that we care to look for them, when they are at hand for our use.

Sometimes we know nothing of the cause except what we can infer from the event itself. And sometimes we have no human testimony to the event and are left to a study of its consequences for all the knowledge we have of it.

§ 2. *The Beginning of Natural Phenomena.*

Therefore, my first point will be to show that in the course and history of the *material world*, there have been interpositions effecting changes in the order and course of events, which interpositions are, in their very nature, miraculous or miracles, and prove the existence of some Being who is above nature.

Our scientific men have, in these latter days, perhaps without knowing it or intending it, rendered us a most invaluable service in this matter. They have shown by most convincing and unanswerable arguments and facts, that the present order of nature and course of events have not always existed. They have shown that we are living in the course of a process or *evolution* which had a beginning and must have an end.

Matter itself, from their point of view, and so far as they know or can affirm, may be eternal. But if so, there was a time in the past when it was but a diffused gas—no atom of it in motion, and no two or more atoms in chemical union or action on each other. Such was then the *order and course of nature*, if we may so call it.

I shall not take the trouble to quote authorities to any considerable extent to prove this point. Every possible theory of evolution implies it. I will cite one authority only, Herbert Spencer. He thinks that no one evolution can be eternal; that it must have had a beginning and will come to an end. This is "a conclusion to which we are inevitably driven." (*First Principles*, § 130.) As it began with a state of diffused gas, every atom at rest and inactive, so it must "come to a

close in universal death." "Evolution must come to a close in complete equilibrium or rest." (§ 136.)

We must realize this fact. We are in a state of progress which had a beginning and must have an end. The beginning was, as I have said, a state of inactivity of matter. Once in a time there were no animals roving in our woods or plants growing in our meadows; there was not a wind blowing; there was no water in our lakes and seas; no land anywhere above the water; no earth in fact, and no stars in the sky over our heads.

All the matter of this universe was a diffused gas. Like the atoms of nitrogen and oxygen that make up the air in this room, they are not in any apparent motion; they are not acting upon each other in accordance with Dalton's law of definite proportions, or any other.

Who or what then acted upon these atoms and set them into motion—into the chemical unions that make up the endlessly varied material substances, changes, and motions that we see around us? They do not and can not begin to act *of themselves*. The fundamental law in regard to all mere matter and material objects *in nature* is, that they are inert and can neither start from rest to action or activity of themselves without something acting upon them, nor can they, or any one of them, change its rate of action or motion, without some outside agency or cause acting upon it.

There must, therefore, have been something, or, rather, Somebody, outside of the material universe to set these atoms in motion.

Only one mode or means of escaping this conclusion has, so far as I know, been suggested. It is, that these extremes—that of gaseous diffusion, and that of ex-

treme condensation—at each of which all the atoms, molecules, and masses are in either absolute inaction or in such an equilibrium of their forces that there is absolutely no motion or change, that these two extremes, I say, are like the extremes which, in mathematics, are known as the *maxima* and *minima*, and may, of course, have occurred in the past history of the universe an unlimited number of times, and may occur as many more times in future, without Divine agency or interposition.

But this is impossible. To the persons who are acquainted with the higher mathematics, it is sufficient to call their attention to the fact that there can be no *maxima* or *minima*, without two forces, or variables, which are so related and so independent of each other that one of them may be active and producing its legitimate results, when the other is either wholly inactive or, at least, is producing no results, passing what we call the zero point of its differential.

But a more familiar example is seen in the case of the weaver's shuttle. He starts it from a state of rest at one side of his web, and catches it with his hand when it reaches the other side. And he tosses it back, too, or it would never start back and reach the other side. And thus he keeps it moving. It does not and cannot move itself or keep moving back and forth without some outside help or force.

Even a man can walk back and forth across the room only because he has soul or mind in his body which may act when that is at rest, and move it about wherever and whenever he pleases.

The distinction between kinetic and latent forces will not help the case. A force is active, or kinetic, when it

is producing results. But when it is not producing its proper results, is not either uniting or keeping united the chemical elements into the thousand forms of the material substances around us, nor yet keeping them in motion, in space, falling to the earth or revolving around some cosmical centre, as the sun, it is said to be latent; and it can no more start itself into the state of active force, than the atoms themselves can start from a state of rest into motion or action.

Like the shuttle of which I have just spoken, it is started by the force of some human hand, is itself a force when in motion; but when it comes to rest at the other side of the web (if it is allowed to drop), it ceases to be a force, or its force becomes latent, and neither the shuttle nor "its latent force" can ever start it into its path across the web of itself again.

The first order or condition of what we call "nature," therefore, was one of absolute rest. In the next stage we have the changes that make up the phenomena that we study in our natural sciences, our chemistry, our physics and our astronomy. But it was the beginning of a new order of things. No atoms, molecules, or masses had ever acted in that way, or in those ways, before. And we are reduced to the alternative; we must either admit that God *created* the matter of this material universe and gave it such properties and laws of action as He saw fit, or, that there must have been a Being who thus started the atoms of matter from a state of absolute inactivity into that state of action which constitutes what we call evolution and gave to them, if not their properties, yet at least the laws under which they now act.

Evolution, then, like revolution and every other series of events which has stages in its progress or process, had a beginning, a first stage, or starting point, somewhere in time—in the times that are past. No matter when or how long ago. It is none the less real on that account, though it may seem to be the less surprising and make much less impression on our minds because of its great antiquity. But it had a beginning, and there was a time when it was not, a first step or stage, a starting point. And if this evolution of mundane affairs in the midst of which we live had a beginning, it must have had a Beginner.

It may be, as Whewell has argued, that the law of gravity is absolute, like the truths of mathematics. But the fact that atoms, molecules, masses do attract each other is not so. Nor yet are the chemical properties of that kind. There is no reason in the nature of things why, for example, oxygen and iron should unite easily and form an oxide or iron rust; or why oxygen and gold unite only with great difficulty, and oxygen and chlorine not at all.

If we ask one who has not thought much on such subjects, why things fall to the earth, why water runs down hill, why iron will rust if left in a moist place, and such like things, the natural and ready answer is, that it is the law of nature that they should do so. Ah, yes; we may reply, but there was a time when they did not act in this way—when in fact they did not act at all. This is as certain as that they now act in the way we see them and call the laws and order of nature. The question is, who started them? Their first starting was as much of a miracle and as truly a miracle as their creation.

But, one miracle proves the possibility of miracles and a Miracle-worker. From the nature of the case He must be a Person and not a mere thing or cause in the order and course of nature. It proves, too, a plan and a purpose, and creates the presumption that He will interpose again and work other miracles whenever His plan or purpose requires it.

§ 3. *The Beginning of Life on the Earth.*

Again, there was a time in the far-off past when there was no living being, plant or animal on the earth. Life was not then among the natural phenomena at all. It was not in the "order and course of nature." We know very well what the first cells of life, whether animal or vegetable, are composed of. Chemistry can analyze these cells and tissues and tell us their constituents;—they are but the "dust of the earth"—oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, etc. And chemists can not only tell us what their elements are: they can tell us, also, in what proportion they combine to form the living tissues. But they cannot tell us how to put them together as we now find them; there is nothing in the course of nature, nothing that they can plan or devise in their laboratory that will bring them together in these precise combinations that make living tissues.

Nor do our scientific men know, nor have they any reason to believe, that if they could put these elements together in the exact proportions and combinations in which we find them in the living tissues of plants and animals, they would form living things, or exhibit any of the phenomena of life. On the contrary, everything "in nature" leads us to expect quite the reverse.

We all know of cases of what are called isomerism or isomorphism in nature. The chemist can make, in his laboratory, exactly the same compound, so far as chemistry can tell, as the phosphate of lime, that we get from the bones of animals and sometimes use as a medical remedy. But in their effects on the human system the two are very different. How, or why, no one can tell.

Again, there are several of the vegetable oils that are precisely alike in their chemical compounds and denotations, but quite unlike in their tastes and effects on living tissues, as, for example, the essential oils of turpentine, of lemons, of bergamont, etc.

I understand, also, that the chemists can make albumen that is precisely like that which we find in the white of an egg, so far as chemistry and chemists can determine. But it is very different in its relations; it will not nourish and bring to development the germ of the chick which is in the yolk of an egg, as that which is found in the egg, which is of nature's production, will do. They can make albumen, indeed, but it is of man's make and will not minister to the functions of life, as does that which God has made.

Hence, the origin of life was supernatural. And although life, with its phenomena of birth, reproduction, decay, and death are now in the order and course of nature, as we observe them, there was a time when they were not so. Their origin was a break in the order of nature—miraculous—such as no man, and God alone and only could produce.

It is claimed, indeed, by many of our modern scientific men, that all of our higher plants and animals, includ.

ing even man himself, have been developed by what they call, "evolution," from the first cells. I do not care to discuss or deny this theory at present. My argument does not require that I should do so; though I will add that it seems most probable, even in a purely scientific point of view, that God has interposed many times for the creation of the first pairs of new species.

But no new species is *known* to have arisen by the way of mere evolution. It is true that we have instances of different species, as they are called, succeeding each other in order in the order of time in the same habitat. But that the one developed into the other by any process of mere evolution, is sheer assumption. For example, we find now in the Ohio valley a race of white people of European descent. A few hundred years ago there were red skin Indians living on the same soil. And long before that were the Mound Builders—three species or varieties of men. Did the Mound Builders develop into the Red-skins? That we do not know, but I think nobody supposes that they did. Did the Red-skins develop into the present White-men? We know they did not. And yet we have as much evidence and just the same evidence that these races, Mound Builders, Red-skins, and Whites have developed into each other, so that the Whites are descended from the Mound Builders, as we have that in the order of nature one species of plant or animals has ever developed into another.

But be this as it may, what is now the order of nature has not always been the order. At the beginning there was, of course, not only a miracle of creation when the first *living* thing was produced, but there has been a

Divine interposition—a miracle—every time and at every stage of the world's progress—whenever a new species, whether plants or animals, has made its appearance as one of the orders of beings that make up this complicated and endlessly varied system of things in the midst of which we live.

§ 4. *The First Appearance of Mind on Earth.*

But again, somewhere along in the line of the ascending series of the earth's progress and development, mind makes its appearance. In man, at least, if not below him, there appears mind as something distinct from mere matter, and in its essential features totally different from it.

Now, whence or how came mind? It is not matter nor any compound of the material elements known to the chemist. Nobody supposes this. Doubtless the mind, so far as we know it, does not act in this world without brain, and except through brain as its organ. But mind is not brain, and brain is not mind. We know the action and something of the laws of each, when acting separately and by themselves. We have what are known as *ideo-motor* actions of the brain. But we have also what are known as voluntary actions of the mind.

Suppose, for example, that after a day of fatigue, the body is inclined to sleep and we say that *we*, the whole of our bodies, are sleepy. But some sense of duty compels us to keep awake and perform the duty we have in mind. Here the mind controls the body.

But, suppose again that after a day of excitement, we are not sleepy; that is, the body and the brain are not

disposed to go to sleep. But we know that we ought to go to sleep and get the rest which can come to us in that way and in that way only. We want to go to sleep, but we cannot do so; the brain is excited, the pulse beats quick, and we keep on thinking in spite of ourselves. Here the brain controls the mind.

Or, again, suppose we hear something that is very witty or very ridiculous; we laugh in spite of ourselves, and we do so sometimes when we feel that it is very improper and unbecoming to do so. But we laugh in spite of ourselves as soon as we understand what is said, and we cannot help ourselves.

Or, in the opposite direction, we hear something that is very sad and painful. We scream or weep, as the case may be, however inopportune the expressions of our emotions may be. This is reflex brain action, and we cannot put it off.

Or, if the provocation be but slight, we can resist the emotion and suppress our laughter or our groans; just as, without any provocation, we can laugh or weep as a mere matter of will force, voluntarily and in imitation of the expressions of the real emotions.

And it is very important that we remember, and distinctly consider in this connection, that the mind is a concrete thing and not mere thought, sensations, or ideas as men of each of the two most opposite schools of philosophy that prevail in our day sometimes distinctly affirm, and more frequently assume. Walking is not the man, though it is the man that walks; the eye is not sight nor seeing, though it is with the eye only that we see. So, thought is not the mind, but it is the mind that thinks or with which we think.

But mind had a beginning, and the important question is, whence came mind in man and to the *first* man or in the first animal that possessed it?—if, indeed, animals possess it at all. It was not natural or in the order and course of nature before. It was nowhere to be found on earth.

Mind is not a mere product of anything that was in existence on this earth before. There was a time, for example, when the oxygen and hydrogen that now compose the water of our lakes and seas were not united so as to form water; they were but separate gases. And their union, when the time and conditions for it had come, was but one step in the progress of development, or evolution. But suppose there was no oxygen or no hydrogen in existence, the origin of either of these elements could have been no act or step in any mere process of evolution. There was nothing in existence to make them out of. The origin of either of those elements, therefore, must have been an act of creation.

And precisely so with mind. Its origin and first appearance must have been the result of creation.

I have spoken thus far of three indisputable facts which are as certainly cases of Divine interposition in "the order and course" of what we call nature—miracles—as they are facts or events whose occurrence no one can dispute. And I have cited and specified only these three because they are beyond dispute or controversy.

But it is mere assumption to say or to hold that God does not interpose in the ordinary affairs of nature and of human life. It is an assumption which it is, doubtless, well to make, both for the purposes of scientific investigation and progress, and for security against the

frauds and impositions to which we are frequently exposed in our daily life.

In the earliest ages of human history, and in savage life everywhere now, it is the prevailing habit to refer a large share of the events of life to Divine agency. But as soon as science had made a beginning, and as a condition to its progress, men began to look upon these things as mere nature, and as implying no Divine agency.

The postulate, as a condition of scientific discovery and progress, was that all things, *all* events and phenomena are the product of natural causes and in accordance with natural law. But this is assuming more than we know or have any right to affirm, or to assume except for the purpose just stated.

Take, for example, the case of a storm. We know many of the causes and conditions of a rain-fall, but why it comes right here and just now, no one can tell. There is in this unknown region of causes and antecedents, a plenty of room for Divine interposition, and also for prayer to God that He will send the rain, and for gratitude to Him for sending it in the time of our need. Much as we now know, and even the more that we may hope to discover and know in the future, will never shut this door of faith and hope against us, never enable us to say with certainty and with confidence that God did not send us the rain from heaven in the time of our want and our need.

Doubtless He did this as He does all else, except the miracles which he works, or enables men to work, to manifest His glory, or to verify the teachings and commands which He gives to man for the special reason of His guidance, by the use of natural forces and in accordance

with natural laws ; just as in writing, I use pen and ink, and paper, and could not write without them. But then, it is I that guide the pen ; I am the cause or agent without which the pen would not move and the writing would not be done. And not only so, but it is I myself, the personal agent, that directs the pen so that it writes one word rather than another—says one thing rather than its opposite.

And precisely so, God, though unseen, as, in fact, my mind is to all but myself—may direct and guide the forces and agents that are seen and recognized as “causes” or “conditions” in the production of nature’s phenomena.

It will not do to say that God is not among and active in these phenomena, because we do not see Him ; for even the most extreme agnostic believes in *unseen* forces. He cannot see gravity, but he believes in its effects, in the falling bodies and the revolving spheres. He cannot *see* electricity, except when it is interfered with in its circuits, and then it becomes apparent in its kindly and genial light, in the terrible thunder crash, or in the instantaneous death of its victim. Even the most extreme agnostic believes in these invisible forces.

And so, too, in the action of the mind. We know, as a matter of science, many of the causes and occasions of the various forms of our mental activity—what occasions the thoughts we have and gives them their peculiar form and character. But we do not know, nor does it seem likely or even possible that we can ever obtain that degree of knowledge or completeness of analysis, that will enable us to say, on merely scientific grounds, that God does or does not interpose, guide our thought,

or, rather, put our thoughts into our minds, when there is no other cause or occasion for the particular thought that seems to dominate and control our actions for the time; or, rather, suggest something that we can do, or, perhaps, ought to do, when, without such intervention—shall we call it inspiration?—no such thought would have occurred to us.

And thus, both in nature and in our own minds, there is room and a place for Divine interference and guidance, such that no attainment in science has or, as we may well believe, ever can close the door against faith and prayer—faith in the Divine guidance and prayer for its exercise in our behalf.

But, then, as I have said, these things are, to some extent, matters of faith and belief, rather than matters of scientific certainty and indisputable fact. But, as I claim, the indisputable facts that I have cited and discussed, prove, and prove, too, beyond controversy or gain-saying that there is a God above us, and that He has interposed—wrought miracles—in the past ages of our earth's history.

§ 5. *Order and Progress in these Changes.*

And in each of these three indisputable steps, or acts of creation, we see order and progress. *First*, the atoms were made to move and act in accordance with what we call their properties and the laws of nature. *Secondly*, animals were created and endowed with what we call instinct, to guide them in the pursuit of food and the avoidance of danger, the production of their young; and then they return to dust. *Finally*, and after the preceding stages, when the world was prepared for man

on the sixth day, God created man and endowed him with reason and conscience to be his guide. The material of his body obeys all the laws of matter. His brain and nerve centres are the organs of reflex actions and instincts like those of the animals below him. But above this there is mind capable of foreseeing the consequence of its acts, capable of choosing what it will do, and conscience to give man the sense of right and duty, and with all, the ideas of a higher life and the hope of immortality.

We have thus seen that before the appearance of man, whether by immediate Creation, or by Evolution, there were, at the least, three cases of Divine interposition—miracles—at each time changing the order of nature. *First*, to produce a mere state of chemical and mechanical action. *Secondly*, to institute an order in which living things, plants or animals, form a part of the observed order, and, *Thirdly*, to institute a higher order in which intelligent beings, capable of choice and voluntary actions, are being constantly produced, live, grow, and beget offspring like themselves, and then die and return to dust.

Now, these facts, these interpositions, in the order and course of nature, creating, as they do, in fact, three successive orders—the one rising, indeed, above the other and in no wise superseding it—rest on indisputable facts in the order and course of nature.

No matter what Hume and sceptics of his class may say about the “fallibility” of human testimony. Here is the testimony of God himself. He has “made his impression” and stamped it, too, in the very rocks. No man can efface it. No man that knows enough of the

facts to say anything or have any opinion about them, can deny it ; and they show that there is a God above nature. He controls it, gives it its laws, manifests Himself, so far as the nature of the material will allow, in its phenomena ; directs and overrules all things according to the dictates of His own will.

Now, if we choose to call this evolution, it can make no difference with the result. Evolution, like Creation, is but a process, and like all processes, it must have had a beginning. And the three stages named above have certainly occurred ; and they as certainly imply the existence and the interposition of a Supernatural Agent. And they are miracles, too, in the highest and truest sense. If, however, we insist upon calling the whole process by the word Evolution, we gain nothing and may possibly deceive ourselves by a mere ambiguity of terms—an ambiguous middle—using a term which is true in one sense of it and false and delusive—fatally delusive—in the other.

And shall we, can we, suppose that the Divine purposes and interferences—the miracles of interference—will stop here? Shall not man be raised from the consequences of his fall?—a fact which is rendered as certain and as indisputable from nature, that part of science which is called anthropology, as it is unequivocally and emphatically taught as the ground, the basis, of all the revelations and institutions of the Dispensations—the Old and the New—that are given us in the Holy Scriptures. Shall not that God who gave to man his being, his conscience and his aspirations, give him also a revelation from time to time, as he is able to receive it, of all the truths that he needs to know for his soul's

health? No matter if He did not give him at the outset the truths of science and scientific knowledge—they would come in due time as a matter of discovery. But will He not give him a religion, its truths and precepts, so that in the long ages while he is waiting for and making his progress in the discovery of scientific truth, he can, by walking by faith, attain to the higher moral excellence of which he is capable in this world, and the salvation of his soul in the next? Will not he who has done so much for nature, for plants and animals, and for the natural man, do also, and, moreover, all that may be necessary for that higher nature which he has also given—all, I say, even to the taking upon Himself of our nature, if need be, and suffering the pain, the ignominy and the shame of the cross, if all that should be found necessary?

And these events, or interpositions and changes in the order and course of nature, were miraculous. It is true that there were no human beings present or in existence at that time, to bear testimony to their occurrence. And we know of the Cause, the agent, that produced them, only as we infer His existence, His attributes, and His characteristics from the events themselves. And of the events, we have only the consequences that followed from them to prove that they ever occurred, and what they really were. But these proofs make the facts indisputable.

And we not only have this indisputable evidence of these miraculous interpositions in the order and course of nature; but we have in them and in their very character, indications of purpose and design. They not only indicate purpose and benevolence in the character

of Him who performed them,—the love of God,—but they look forward to, and prophecy and lead us to expect, something further and higher in the same line; they predict and lead us to expect a higher life—a life without the infirmities inseparable from the body, from disease, the infirmities of old age, decay and death.

§ 6. *The Christian Miracles.*

It forms no part of this essay to discuss in detail the miracles—whether those recorded in the Old or the New Testament. Nor yet do I need to assume, nor in fact do I intend to assume, that all those that are there spoken of ever actually occurred; that is, I do not mean to assume that all the passages describing them are genuine; still less do I intend to admit that any of them are forgeries or corruptions that have found their way into the text since the original narratives were written.

Whether such corruptions have found their way into the text as we now have it, or not, is a fair and legitimate subject of criticism. And by the final result of such critical investigations we must abide, whatever it may be. But that account of *some* of the miracles forms a part of the genuine text, no one can deny. And, moreover, they all, or, at least, nearly all of them, have such a connection with the general run of the text, and are reported to have been wrought with such an evident purpose, a purpose so germane to the subject itself, that no one can deny their integral connection with the subject and as a part of the history of our Lord himself.

At all events, no one can read the accounts of those events without being persuaded that those who recorded them believed them to have occurred. And not only

so, but those who have given us the accounts of those wonderful events, speak of them as having been done *for a purpose*; they were performed, as we are expressly assured, not only in the face of most adverse criticism, but for the very purpose of showing that they were such works as no man could perform, except God were with him.

Now, my proposition is, that miracles are not only credible in themselves, as having actually occurred in the course of nature, but, they are to be expected whenever there is occasion for them, or *nodus deo dignus*, as the old Latin poet said.

And such an occasion there is and has been since the creation of man, whether *immediately* out of the dust of the earth, or *mediately* and in some process of evolution, whenever it became necessary for the advancement of man to make known to him some truth of a moral or spiritual nature that was higher than anything that he had discovered or could know by discovery and thorough comprehension, and that was needed, moreover, to induce him and to enable him to lead a higher life, that so he might *walk by faith* upwards towards that higher and spiritual level of which he has hopes and aspirations.

In any view of it, the Evolution in the midst of which we are now living, is tending upwards. First, mere chemical and physical action; then life and animal instinct, and then intelligence with reason and conscience. Assuredly the present life of man is not the highest that is conceivable. Even with the perfection, both moral and intellectual, of the human race which we may hope for in the future, there is *something* conceivable, at least,

that is higher than the life that we now live, even at its best; better than anything can be in this world, with bodies that decay, and wants, aspirations, and necessities that cannot be supplied or satisfied here.

§ 7. *The Miracle of the Resurrection.*

It is not my intention to present in this Essay what may be called the positive evidence of the fact of the Resurrection, and what is often presented in that way as the grounds of our belief in the fact. I propose, rather, to call attention to certain facts of a negative character; not so much to things that were said or done, as to certain things that were not said and done, and the legitimate inference from them.

It appears that our Lord's disciples, as well as his enemies, had understood that before his crucifixion He had predicted His resurrection. Hence, the enemies went and sought of the Military Governor, a guard of soldiers to watch over His tomb, "lest His disciples come by night and steal his body away," and claim that He had risen. They had what they asked for.

But when they found His body no longer in the tomb where it had been laid, did they deny the fact of His resurrection? No, not at all; they went and bribed the soldiers to tell a lie and to confess a crime—to say that "while they slept, His disciples came and stole Him away;" whereas, a disproof of the fact, if that had been possible, would have been the most effectual way of accomplishing their object.

Again, some days after the Resurrection we find the Apostles preaching the gospel concerning Him, and especially the fact that "God had raised him from the

dead." And what did these wise men of the Sanhedrim, the Gamaliels of the age, do? Did they deny the fact? No, no; not at all. But they *did* arrest the men who were preaching the fact, chastised them with whips, put them in prison, and "straightly threatened them with death that they should speak to no man" thereafter of this matter. Even he, the wise Gamaliel, who had the wisdom and the shrewdness to see and to say that if the matter were "of men it would certainly come to naught;" whereas, if it were of God, they "could not overthrow it;" even he appears to have concurred in the policy, that inasmuch as they could not disprove the fact of the Resurrection, the best thing they could do was to straightly charge and threaten them that they say no more about it—speak to no man of the matter. They could not deny the fact; the best they could hope to do was to suppress all proclamation and publication of it.

But it is said that these narratives, the Gospels and the Book of the Acts, are not altogether authentic. Even if we have something of the accounts that were written at the time and by eye-witnesses, they have been tampered with, altered, enlarged and corrupted, so that we cannot accept them as ultimate and final authority with regard to any particular event, and especially if that event be something of a supernatural and improbable character.

But it seems to me perfectly evident that if those who saw and knew our Lord in person, had not believed that he actually wrought miracles, some of them that are ascribed to Him, no such books as our Gospels would have ever been written.

§ 8. *The Testimony of St. Paul.*

I come, then, to an authority that does not labor under any questions or suggestions, even, as to the genuineness of the Documents we have to use.

The genuineness of four of St. Paul's Epistles—that to the Romans, the two to the Corinthians, and that to the Gallatians, have altogether escaped all the fiery darts of the adversaries of revealed truth.

Let us turn, then, to St. Paul's account of the fact and of the importance which he and his fellow Christians attached to the fact of Christ's Resurrection from the dead. St. Paul speaks of the importance of the fact of the Resurrection in these emphatic words: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, for we have testified of God that He raised up Christ; but if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." That is, if the Resurrection be not a fact, Christianity is of no avail *as a religion for the salvation of souls*; whatever it may be or do for a philosophy about which men may speculate and with which the idle and unconcerned may amuse themselves.

Let us now see what St. Paul says of the evidence or means of certainty and confidence which he and his fellow-Christians had in this stupendous but fundamental fact. He says that after the Resurrection, our Lord "was seen of Cephas (Peter), then of the twelve. After that He was seen by about five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present (time). After that He was seen of James; then (again)

of all the Apostles. And last of all, He was seen of me, also, as one born out of due time."

Now, here was not only an appeal to the testimony such as we have in the other Scriptures in the Gospels, but to more than two hundred and fifty, the greater part of more than five hundred persons, living witnesses to that fact. They may not all of them, or, in fact, many of them, have been at Corinth. But they were among all the widely scattered nationalities of those who were present on the day of Pentecost—"Parthians, Medes and Elamites; dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Judea, and in Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia; in Egypt and in the parts about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians. In all these parts of the known world there must have been within the reach of, and accessible to, every doubter who may have cared to make the inquiry whether it were a fact or not, that our Lord rose from the dead on the third day, as the Apostles taught and as all believers acknowledged.

§ 9. *No Effort to Disprove It.*

But there is not the slightest evidence, not even the trace of a tradition, that these unbelievers and enemies of our Lord disproved, or even so much as attempted to disprove, the stories which His disciples and the believers put forth and publicly claimed with regard to His Resurrection from the dead.

Doubtless His friends and disciples put forth the claim. They based everything, all their possessions and prosperity in this world and all their hopes for the next, on this fact. One of them went so far as to say that

“if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

Now, in view of this fact, its notoriety and its importance, no sensible man can doubt that if “the wise men” of that age, who did not believe, had undertaken and succeeded in any effort to disprove the claims of the Christians, and show that our Lord did not rise, the account of that effort would not have been altogether lost. Not only would Christianity itself have “come to nought,” but a record of any such effort to disprove it and remove its very foundation and corner-stone would have come down to us. Christianity—the Gospel and the Church—had received too much attention, had awakened too much, both of love and of hate, to be passed over in silence. Either it would prevail, or its claim and some record of the effort to suppress it, and the fact of its suppression could not fail to have come down to our times.

But we have not the slightest hint, suggestion, or tradition that any effort or attempt was actually made, in face of this stupendous and most revolutionary claim, to show that it was not well founded in the unalterable and indisputable facts of the history of what had so recently transpired that men could know, if they wanted to know, whether the event had occurred or not.

But so far as we know, or have any hint or suggestion, no such appeal was made. And it would seem that then, as now, sometimes, at least, the unbelievers came to the conclusion that the least said the better for their cause—the less inquiry and investigation, the more success could they hope to have in their unbelief and agnosticism.

We have evidence in abundance of the efforts to suppress the religion of Christ, but none of any effort to deny the fundamental fact on which it rested. We know that its enemies bribed the soldiers to tell a lie about the Resurrection. We know that the authorities in Jerusalem persecuted the men who preached and threatened to put them to death if they did not stop. We know of the Roman Emperors who tried to suppress it, to put an end to the Religion that was founded upon this fact. But not a word or a hint at any effort to disprove the grand and the controlling fact of the Resurrection.

There were men in that age who were as hostile to Christianity, and as unscrupulous and as unreasonable in their opposition, and as shrewd in their methods, as any we have living now—as unreasonable, as unscrupulous, as shrewd as the Huxleys and the Ingersolls of our day. But no one of them ventured to deny the fact of our Lord's Resurrection, so long as there was a witness living, or a means of ascertaining the truth in regard to the fact.

There were men, indeed, as we learn from St. Paul, who doubted and denied that there was to be any general resurrection of the bodies of all men. But St. Paul referred to the undoubted and undisputed fact that Christ did arise, and proceeds to argue from that fact the possibility and the probability, even, that all Christians, at least, would arise also.

§ 10. *The Resurrection not an Isolated Fact.*

But the Resurrection fact does not stand by itself and alone. Like the divine interpositions already spoken of in the beginning of this Essay, it was the introduc-

tion and beginning of a new order. Our Lord spoke of that new order as the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of Heaven. On the day of Pentecost, some fifty days after the Resurrection, there was an event which was spoken of as a consequence of the Resurrection, the beginning of a spiritual life that was a new thing on the earth. The entrance upon it was designated a "regeneration," a "new birth." And at all events we find in the Church, in the lives of its members, and in the history of its doings, a new order of things, as unlike and as far above what had been seen before, as the animal life was above the mere physical action of matter, or the rational life of man above the mere instincts of animals.

There are one or two hypotheses, or suggestions, with regard to our Lord's Resurrection, that I think it worth while to notice in closing this Essay.

One is held by certain etherial, or, perhaps I should say, ideal-minded persons, to the effect that the Resurrection should be understood in a spiritual sense; that the real body did not arise, but that the expressions used in regard to it are only a coarse, worldly-minded way of indicating the fact that Christianity itself rose in the public estimation, spread abroad over the earth, and finally prevailed over all other forms of religion, or will do so.

But persons who are inclined to this view should remember, not only that it is not in accordance with the Scripture statements, but also, and more especially, that it was, as is indicated by all the history of the time, the one fact that our Lord did arise from the dead, or was actually believed to have done so in the most sober

earnest, that caused a Gospel to be preached throughout the whole world, and ultimately to prevail anywhere. It was the very fact of a real resurrection that gave life and impulse to the whole movement, and not any mere supersensuous fancy used as a forcible figure of speech.

Another theory that has sometimes been advanced, is that what the Apostles and others thought they saw and spoke of as our Lord Himself in person, was a mere phantom, a spirit, an illusion.

This theory seems to concede that the fact of something which the Apostles and others, and in one case above five hundred at once, thought they saw as the Lord after He was risen from the dead, is too well attested to admit of any successful effort at contradiction or denial.

If, now, we turn to the Records, we find that no pains appears to have been spared and no means omitted, to show that what they actually saw was not a mere phantom,—“a spirit” is the word used,—but our Lord Himself, with the actual prints of the nails in his hands and the hole caused by the piercing of the spear in his side. He even ate broiled fish with them, as if to put the matter beyond all doubt that it was really the Lord Himself, and no mere phantom, ghost, or other form of the apparition of what was in fact an unreality—the mere appearance of something that was not actually present.

But undoubtedly the Body was somewhat changed in the transition. It had become what St. Paul calls “a spiritual Body.” Precisely what that was, we may not be able to tell. But we have a few facts that are suggestive ; and the one that I would call especial notice

to is the fact that He seems, after His Resurrection, to have been invisible to the eyes of all beholders, except those to whom He chose to make Himself visible. Thus, we are told that on one occasion He appeared standing in their midst, when the doors were all shut so that there could have been no entrance by that ordinary means of admission to the room.

Was the change in Himself,—as in the case of the invisible vapor that rises from a lake and becomes condensed into a visible cloud overhead,—or was the change in their eyes, so that for the moment, at least, they could see things spiritual as we now see things material, when they are in the light of the sun and other luminaries of this world?

These are questions that we need not discuss, for any of the purposes we have now in hand, and which, therefore, I shall not undertake to answer.

§ II. *The Effects of the Resurrection.*

I have said but very little about the third great element of the proof of this event that is alleged to have occurred in the history of the past, namely, the consequences that have followed from it.

In the case of our Lord's miracles, and most especially the great miracle of his Resurrection, we have most important consequences—consequences which have been often treated as being in themselves and alone sufficient proof of their having occurred.

I have no time or space to speak at length of the consequences and influences that have followed from that one great event in human history; they may be indicated under three heads, two of which are well known, but the other cannot be fully known until the second

coming, when the number of souls that will have been received into their final state of bliss is known.

The first that I shall name is the conduct of those who had the best means of knowing whether He rose from the dead or not. Of this I have said something already. We must consider the unpopularity of the cause *at the time*; the bitter hostility, amounting almost to a persecution of the believers, including the Apostles themselves, committing them not only to imprisonment, but to death, as well.

Then, too, whatever of glory and honor they may have received since that time, and with which we now honor their memories, we have no reason to suppose that they had any foresight of it. Nothing, then, by way of worldly honor or wealth, such as influence the minds of merely worldly-minded men, can even for a moment be supposed to have influenced them.

Surely, if of all men "they were most miserable," as St. Paul says they were, most of them having suffered the loss of all worldly things, and martyrdom, as the result of their convictions, we have all that we need to consider under this head.

In the second place, the spread of Christianity, the growth of its influence, and the changes which it has wrought in the moral state and condition of man, is such, I think, as no man who has fully considered it, will hesitate to regard as sufficient to vindicate its claim to supernatural origin, and make its introduction an occasion worthy of Divine interposition, and of any miracle, or series of miracles, that from their number, and more especially from their *nature*, were calculated to impress most deeply the minds and hearts of men.

And I need not add that nothing but a belief in our Lord's Divinity, as manifested by His miracles, and as the Apostles expressly testify, by that one greatest of all miracles—the Resurrection of His Body from the dead—could have so affected the minds and hearts of men, wrought such a revolution, such a “regeneration” in the whole tone and tenor of the nature of man.

Of the third point—the salvation of souls and the number of the saved, which can never be known in this world, either their number or their blessedness—I shall say no more in this place. And surely these are enough under this head of our argument.

I have thus spoken of the certainty of miracles and of the great miracle of our Lord's Resurrection. It is necessary that we should be able to make our position good in regard to these things, against all the objections of those who are opposed to them.

§ 12. *The Argument from Experience.*

It is seldom mere fact or argument that brings men to a true confession of Christ and Christianity. It is rather the sight or contemplation of Him who was lifted up upon the cross for our salvation, and the consciousness of guilt and the need of salvation and a Saviour that brings us heart and soul to that blessed result. And there must be a certain moral condition—a “predisposedness of heart”—to receive the word, or that word is of no avail. This was true in the time of our Lord and His Apostles, as it is now. “Many were called, but few [accepted the call] were chosen.”

But, after all, the one great argument in favor of Christianity, with the masses of mankind, is experience—Christian experience, the experience of the Christian life.

Our Lord said, if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be true or not. This is an appeal to experience; and it has proved most satisfactory. At first it was necessary to believe in Christianity and receive it, on the ground of the miracles that were wrought, if at all. But now, thousands and millions, for the last eighteen hundred years, have tried it and found it to be, indeed, all that it claimed to be, or that our Lord claimed for it.

Suppose some one should propose a remedy for some terrible scourge, say yellow fever. Men would try it on grounds satisfactory to them before-hand and *a priori*. But if it should succeed in all cases, or even in the great majority of them, men would begin to have confidence in it and resort to it in all cases of necessity on the ground of experience. It has been tried, men would say, and never fails, and it is the only remedy that never fails.

Now, we have just this kind of experience in proof of the great truths and of the whole system of Christianity—the Church and the doctrines it teaches. It has been tried in these hundreds and millions of cases, and it never has failed. No one who has tried it and trusted in it, has ever been disappointed.

Faith and Knowledge—these two, and for one purpose and in one respect, the greatest of the two is knowledge. But in one other relation and for another purpose, faith is the greatest.

The one—knowledge—comes by observation and discovery. By observation we get what constitutes the “common sense” of mankind—what Plato called *doxa*, and by discovery we get what he called scientific knowl-

edge, *episteme*. And this last he held to be a sort of revelation, only the recalling of ideas that were put into our minds by God Himself before we were born.

We have a case illustrative of the two, and the difference between them. It is the common sense of all uneducated men that the earth stands still and that the sun, moon and stars move around us. Whereas, the scientific view—the result of discovery—is that the sun stands still and that the earth moves on its axis and in its orbit around the sun.

But I have already intimated (p. 4) that we have ideas and knowledge, in a sense, that could not have come at the time when they first appeared in human thought, from that source—they were given by inspiration and revelation.

But, then, what came at first by revelation may have become, and as I think, much of it has become, to a very large extent, matter of discovery, and so of scientific knowledge. Under this head I will cite, now, only the two instances: (1) The order and method of the creation, as described by Moses, and (2) the truth of the spiritual life as taught in the Christian Scriptures, and verified by the experience of so many millions of believers.

Man is, undoubtedly, endowed with what we may call religious instincts, and religious insight. By the one he *feels*, in the presence of the grander scenes of nature—a Borealis, or a thunder storm—that there is something above and behind the mere visible objects that he can see with his eyes. And by the other he *sees* that there must be something or somebody at work in the phenomena of nature besides mere inert matter, and incomparably superior, too—though in a sense like—the mind or soul of any man.

On these two elements, feeling and insight, are founded all the systems of religion, worship—theology or mythology—of heathen nations.

Doubtless, in the higher and more spiritual of them, there are truths of a very high order; such as are found in the Hebrew and Christian Revelations. But in those relations they are but insight and conjecture; or fancy and imposture. They were in no case attested by miracles that were needed for our use, or committed to a Priesthood or Ministry to be perpetuated and taught to *all nations* for the salvation of the souls of those that believe.

And while, in the case of all other religions, the advance of science and of scientific discoveries—when they have been prosecuted or allowed to be prosecuted—has done away with, or is fast doing away with, them all, and showing, in fact, that they had no adequate foundation to rest upon; in Christian lands, on the contrary, the progress of science has only swept away, and is still sweeping away, the superstitions and abuses that had gathered around its fundamental facts and truths, and leaving these facts and truths to be only the more clearly understood, the more thoroughly appreciated and the more earnestly believed.

It is a matter of common experience, as well as the teaching of Holy Scripture, that there is in man an "evil heart of unbelief" that does, sometimes, keep them from accepting and acting upon truths that are of the utmost importance to their welfare, as well those that pertain to the life that now is, as those that pertain to that which is to come.

What we see and appreciate depends very much on

what we *are*, and what we become depends, to about the same extent, on what we see and approve.

But somewhere along in the course of our lives there must come in, the exercise of faith and of voluntary and persistent effort, if we are ever to become anything better than we now are.

There is, then, a world and a life to come. There are things spiritual that are not seen by mortal eyes in this life. God has interposed and made Himself manifest in this world long before man was created. He has interposed, as we believe, more than once since that event for the good of man, for his guidance, for his restoration and for his salvation. We believe that He is present in the events of history, and presides over and guides the affairs of this universe, so that not even a sparrow falls without His notice.

Slowly as the Church has spread, the Gospel has, nevertheless, made progress and is making progress still. And we have the assurance that it shall continue and keep on doing its work until that blessed time shall come when no man will need to teach his neighbor, saying, "know the Lord," for all shall know him, from the least to the greatest, and when humanity itself shall have been so regenerated that the Lord will have written His laws in all minds and impressed them on all hearts, and righteousness and holiness shall fill the earth as "the waters cover the sea."

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